

Page 6, line 3, delete "amended".

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel Claims 1-5, as examined during the P.C.T. international phase (which were the subject of the Chapter II International Preliminary Examination Report, filed June 14, 1999), and substitute therefor the following new claims:

--6. Apparatus for cutting sheet material, comprising:  
a lower part for placing below a piece of sheet material.

an upper part disposed above said lower part, with a gap existing between said upper part and said lower part for receiving said piece of sheet material;

a cutting blade secured in said upper and lower parts and extending across said gap;

means for exerting pressure on said upper part in said gap for bearing on said lower part, so that said piece of sheet material is able to be inserted between said means for exerting pressure and said lower part for tensioning the sheet material in the vicinity of said cutting blade.

7. The apparatus for cutting sheet material according to Claim 6, wherein said cutting blade is the only mechanical connection between said upper part and said lower part, so that there is no obstruction to free movement of said apparatus when engaged with sheet material.

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8. The apparatus for cutting sheet material according to Claim 6, further comprising a holder for said cutting blade wherein said cutting blade and said holder, in combination with one another, is the only mechanical connection between said upper part and said lower part, so that there is no obstruction to free movement of said apparatus when engaged with sheet material.

9. The apparatus for cutting sheet material according to Claim 6, wherein said means for exerting pressure comprises a freely rotatable wheel, positioned immediately in front of said cutting blade.

10. The apparatus for cutting sheet material according to Claim 6, wherein an upper face of said lower part and a lower face of said upper part are shaped for providing matching sinusoidal surfaces for supporting said upper part and for tensioning said sheet material.

11. The apparatus for cutting sheet material according to Claim 6, further comprising a window provided in said upper part for viewing said sheet material when said sheet material is immediately in front of said cutting blade.

12. The apparatus for cutting sheet material according to Claim 6, further comprising a window provided in said lower part for viewing said sheet material when said sheet material is immediately in front of said cutting blade.

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13. Apparatus for cutting sheet material, comprising:  
a lower part for placing below a piece of sheet material;  
an upper part disposed above said lower part, with a gap existing between said upper part and said lower part for receiving said piece of sheet material;  
a cutting blade secured in said upper and lower parts and extending across said gap;  
means for exerting pressure on said lower part in said gap for bearing on said upper part, so that said piece of sheet material is able to be inserted between said means for exerting pressure and said upper part for tensioning the sheet material in the vicinity of said cutting blade.

14. The apparatus for cutting sheet material according to Claim 13, wherein said cutting blade is the only mechanical connection between said upper part and said lower part, so that there is no obstruction to free movement of said apparatus when engaged with sheet material.

15. The apparatus for cutting sheet material according to Claim 13, further comprising a holder for said cutting blade wherein said cutting blade and said holder, in combination with one another, is the only mechanical connection between said upper part and said lower part, so that there is no obstruction to free movement of said apparatus when engaged with sheet material.

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16. The apparatus for cutting sheet material according to Claim 13, wherein said means for exerting pressure comprises a freely rotatable wheel, positioned immediately in front of said cutting blade.

17. The apparatus for cutting sheet material according to Claim 13, wherein an upper face of said lower part and a lower face of said upper part are shaped for providing matching sinusoidal surfaces for supporting said upper part and for tensioning said sheet material.

18. The apparatus for cutting sheet material according to Claim 13, further comprising a window provided in said upper part for viewing said sheet material when said sheet material is immediately in front of said cutting blade.

19. The apparatus for cutting sheet material according to Claim 13, further comprising a window provided in said lower part for viewing said sheet material when said sheet material is immediately in front of said cutting blade.--

#### REMARKS

Prior to an examination on the merits of the above-identified patent application, please enter the foregoing preliminary amendments.

Claims 6-19 are pending in the above-identified patent application, as entered by this Preliminary Amendment.